

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MASERU 00484 261241Z

47

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4015

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0484

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US LT SF

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN'S VIEWS ON DOMESTIC

POLITICS, RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

1. SUMMARY: DURING AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN, LATTER WAS REMARKABLY CANDID IN DISCUSSING LESOTHO'S POLITICAL SITUATION AND, ESPECIALLY, RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA. HE SAID LESOTHO WAS PEACEFUL AND WOULD HOLD FREE ELECTIONS VERY SOON, THAT HIS RECENT MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WAS UNDERTAKEN AT THE LATTER'S INITIATIVE AND ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS, THAT LESOTHO WOULD NOT ACCEPT APARTHEID, THAT THE MALIBAM-ATSO SCHEME WAS RESUSCITATED, AND THAT SAG HAD INSTIGATED THE CLASHES WHICH LED TO THE RETURN OF LESOTHO'S MINERS.

2. AFTER EXPRESSIONS OF WARM WELCOME AND APPRECIATION FOR U.S. AID, JONATHAN OPENED CONVERSATION BY SAYING HE WAS SURE AMBASSADOR WOULD WANT TO KNOW ABOUT POLITICAL SITUATION IN LESOTHO. SAID NOBODY DENIED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A NUMBER OF FATALITIES IN THE COUNTRY IN WAKE OF DISTURBANCES IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MASERU 00484 261241Z

EARLY JANUARY. THIS WAS A RESULT OF HIS OWN FOLLOWERS TAKING

RETRIBUTION AGAINST FOLLOWERS OF MOKHEHLE. HOWEVER, THOSE DISTURBANCES HAVE ENDED AND COUNTRY IS AT PEACE, AS AMBASSADOR HOPEFULLY WOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE AS HE TRAVELED AROUND COUNTRY. SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH PRESS HAD, FOR REASONS JONATHAN DID NOT KNOW, PUBLISHED GROSSLY DISTORTED ACCOUNTS OF DISTURBANCES AND UNREST.

3. JONATHAN SAID GOVERNMENT'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO RETURN COUNTRY TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN A MULTI-PARTY FRAMEWORK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD "VERY SOON, ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT SET A DEFINITE DATE. INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS, ALTHOUGH APPOINTED, REPRESENTATIVE OF CROSS-SECTION OF COUNTRY, BUT PEOPLE SHOULD ELECT A GOVERNMENT OF THEIR OWN. ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AS SOON AS PASSIONS HAVE HAD TIME TO COOL, AND OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD PARTICIPATE. CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM WERE WELCOMED, BUT GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY "FOOLISHNESS" OR SUBVERSION. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR JONATHAN'S BRIEFING ON POLITICAL SITUATION

AND HOPED EFFORTS WOULD CONTINUE MOVE TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

4. IN REPLY TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION REGARDING HIS MEETING WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER VORSTER, JONATHAN GAVE A LENGTHY, DIRECT REPLY, EVEN QUOTING VORSTER AT TIMES. SAID MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE AT VORSTER'S REQUEST OF LONG STANDING; DUE TO DIFFICULTIES OF SCHEDULES AND VENUE, MEETING WAS POSTPONED UNTIL RECENTLY. LESOTHO CONSIDERED JAN SMUTS AIRPORT NEUTRAL GROUND BECAUSE IT IS AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

5. VORSTER OPENED MEETING BY COMPLAINING THAT JONATHAN'S CHARACTERIZATION OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA AS "INHUMAN" AND "ABHORRENT" AMOUNTED TO INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. VORSTER HAD IN MIND JONATHAN'S PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS SINCE THE TIME OF HIS VISIT TO DENMARK. HE ASKED JONATHAN TO DESIST. JONATHAN REPLIED TO AFFECT THAT SINCE THEIR FIRST MEETING IN CAPE TOWN SOME YEARS AGO, HE HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT LESOTHO WOULD NEVER ACCEPT APARTHEID

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MASERU 00484 261241Z

AND HE WOULD SPEAK HIS MIND. JONATHAN TOLD VORSTER THIS WAS A MATTER ON WHICH HE HOPED THEY WOULD "AGREE TO DISAGREE." VORSTER REQUESTED THAT IN ANY PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS AGAINST APARTHEID, JONATHAN WOULD AT LEAST REFRAIN FROM MENTIONING SOUTH AFRICA; JONATHAN REPLIED HE COULD NOT AGREE BECAUSE HE WAS BOUND TO BE ASKED ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA IN PUBLIC AND WOULD HAVE TO REPLY. VORSTER ALSO COMPLAINED OF PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO LESOTHO FOREIGN MINISTER

PEETE PEETE AT NONALIGNED MEETING IN GUYANA IN 1972.
JONATHAN SAID HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO RESPOND BECAUSE VORSTER
DID NOT HAVE ANY SUCH STATEMENTS IN HAND. JONATHAN SAID GOL
MUST UPHOLD ITS PRINCIPLES BUT EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE NOT TO
BE PROVOCATIVE.

6. JONATHAN'S OWN INTERPRETATION OF VORSTER'S DEMARCHE WAS
THAT SOUTH AFRICA FEARED LESOTHO WAS BECOMING TOO CLOSE
TO SOCIALIST, I.E., SCANDINAVIAN, COUNTRIES. VORSTER HAD
ASKED WHETHER LESOTHO WOULD CONSIDER ESTABLISHING RELATIONS
WITH RED CHINA. JONATHAN HAD REPLIED, "YES, WHY NOT, IF
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